

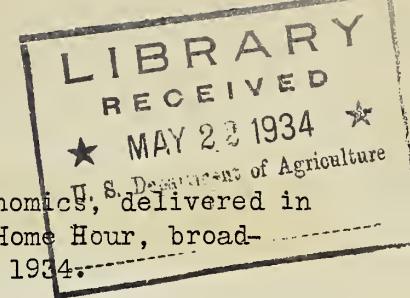
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR



A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC stations, Monday, May 7, 1934.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Miss Van Deman, what's on your Household Calendar on a warm spring day like this?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Summer clothes -- cool wash fabrics for hot weather wear. Very feminine subject, you'll probably rate it.

MR. SALISBURY: Not at all, unless you choose to make it so. Remember, Miss Van Deman, women aren't the only ones who have an interest in textiles. Haven't your experts some facts about men's shirts and these cool summer suits?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I'm sure they have. Matter of fact, I believe it was men's shirts that got the manufacturers going on the shrinkage question and led to new methods of shrinking cottons so that we can buy them with more assurance. I'll be glad to give you all that some other time. But today I'd like to stick to dress goods, rayons especially.

MR. SALISBURY: O. K. Miss Van Deman, go ahead. But don't forget about the shirts.

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right, I'll keep them in mind.

Well, what set me off on rayons particularly was my young friend Betty's experience when she went to buy her graduation dress. She was after a smart simple tailored model (in fact that's the type of graduation dress her college requires. Fussy expensive graduation clothes are simply "not done" on that campus). Well, after going through all the shops Betty found just what she wanted -- right style, right price, perfect fit. The material was very attractive to look at, but how would it clean? After all that's a pretty big item in a white dress. The clerk thought the material was rayon (there was no label to tell), and she thought it would wash. She didn't know about the ironing. As to whether it would shrink, she simply couldn't say. Betty finally decided to take the chance but she won't know until she washes her dress this summer whether she got good value for her money or whether she was gypped.

I've noticed also that the yard goods departments of the stores are full of charming rayons under all sorts of fancy trade names, about as far fetched as the names you see on Pullman cars. Or sometimes these fabrics are labeled acetates, which comes from the cellulose acetate process by which one group of these synthetic fibers are made. Personally the word acetate as applied to a dress fabric doesn't appeal to me; maybe I'll warm up to it in time if I have to. But just imagine a bride going up the aisle in a gown of white acetate. Rayon, the name adopted some years ago by the trade group, suits my ear far better.

Well, be that as it may, I asked Clarice Scott of our textile division so many questions about the washing qualities and what-not of these acetates or rayons that in self-defense she went out and bought quarter yard samples of a dozen or more, including several white ones of the type for graduation dresses. She took them down to the laboratory and washed half of each piece. She followed just the good home practice -- used neutral lukewarm soap suds, rinsed them 2 or 3 times.

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in clear water, and always squeezed, never wrung them. Then she laid the wet fabrics out on a thick soft bath towels, rolled them up and let them stand for a little while, and finally pressed them on the wrong side while they were still damp.

She came out with some very interesting results, which go to show that you certainly can't let price be your only guide. For in this test both the cheap and the costly showed up 100 percent on color fastness. The rayon manufacturers appear to know their dyes all right. The delicate pinks, the reds, the greens, even one plain dark blue, didn't change a shade. And the whites stayed white.

One flowery print that would be lovely in a summer evening dress, also stood the shrinkage test perfectly. "It was as easy to wash and iron as an old handkerchief", Miss Scott said. Strange to say though, a green and white diagonal plaid, with what looked to be the same smooth firm plain weave, stretched an astonishing amount lengthwise. So if you happen to make that up in a sport frock you'll probably have to turn up your hem a time or two during the summer. Not the worst fault, of course, but a little annoying even so.

On shrinkage the higher-priced white crepes were the really bad actors. One charming piece with a little sheer check made by a novelty weave, to quote Miss Scott again, "fairly tied itself into bow knots on the ironing board," and when she finally did get it smoothed out the shrinkage measured at the rate of about 4 inches to the yard lengthwise, and an inch crosswise. Imagine what would happen to the hem and waist line when you washed a dress of that material. Another lovely delicate white crepe was also the very dickens to iron and it shrank badly. Quite to the contrary, a triple sheer print behaved beautifully under the iron though it stretched a little crosswise. Also, one of the pretty sand crepes, so stylish this spring, was easy to manage but it stretched about 2 inches crosswise and drew up an equal amount lengthwise.

All of which goes to show that until we can get textiles definitely labelled pre-shrunk and with other facts about wearing quality, each purchase is a gamble. Anyway, it's up to us consumers to register our opinion with the people who make and sell these fabrics. If you happen to be buying one of these pretty rayons I just hope you're a lucky chooser, that's all.

Goodbye, until next time.